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REVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY ON THE EVIDENCES OF  
CHRISTIANITY IN THE FREETHINKING CHRISTIANS'  
MAGAZINE.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**HE second fact to which 'Christophilus' directs our attention, is the circumstance of the Jews continuing a separate and distinct people, throughout their dispersion among the various nations of the earth, and preserving their customs and peculiarities amid the varying manners, and shifting sentiments of human societies. "All other nations (says Christophilus, vol. i. page 360), that have been conquered, have been absorbed in the nations who conquered them, or they have swallowed up their conquerors. The Normans have become Frenchmen—the French in England have become Britons—the Tartars have become Chinese—Greece was lost in the Roman name, and now the Roman name is obliterated by the Gauls. The Franks, the Germans, and the nations of the East, are lost among the barbarous nations whom they civilized and polished, while the degraded inhabitants of Judea, though dispersed among all nations, thus still continue a distinct people, governed by their own laws."

For this remarkable fact, the writer asks an adequate cause, openly avowing his belief, that the finger of God has directed the fate of the Jewish nation; and that the past and the present condition of the children of Israel was foretold by the prophets, many ages back. To prove this, several quotations are selected from the ingenious 'Illustrations of Prophecy,' in which the reader is struck with the force of many of the passages, produced from the prophetic writings, and the sternest judgment seems compelled to admit the irresistible application of the Divine predictions. "I will sift the House of Israel among ALL NATIONS, like as corn is sifted in a sieve." "I will deliver them to be removed into ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them."

The answer to this part of the argument is to be found in the Magazine, for July 1812, page 299. It is from the pen of A. B.

and it is but justice to the writer to acknowledge, that whether his reasoning is good or bad, his ideas are always conveyed with peculiar clearness, and a happy turn of expression, which gives full effect to his opinions. A. B. commences his operations on Prophecy by general reflections as to its origin, and the different modes of prophecy. The calculations of the astronomer, it seems, he reckons one mode of prophecy; the computation of moral effects from the observation of those effects, in similar circumstances, another; and the bold and artful prediction of any cunning individual, who has an eye to some peculiar purpose, within the scope of possibility, a third. But to what end has the writer favoured us with these loose and desultory remarks, unless it can be shewn that the peculiar point in dispute (the prophecy concerning the present condition of the Jews), falls within any of the different modes adduced? The first must be set out, *sans ceremonie*, for no mathematical calculation can determine the fate of a nation three thousand years hence; as for the second, it is sufficient to say, that the existence of the Jews, as a distinct people, over the face of the globe, presents a phenomenon in the history of nations, to which no parallel can be found—a race of men mixing with the busy concerns of human associations, and yet remaining century after century isolated from the countries which give them birth, is a fact to which the accumulated wonders of time afford nothing analogous; and consequently, as it admits of no comparison, no probable anticipation could have been formed, and all mortal foresight must have been eluded. To the last supposition I answer, that though the event has determined it to be “within the scope of possibility,” yet such has been the remarkable fatality attendant on the disciples of Moses, that no man would have thought it so at the time the predictions were uttered. It may be necessary to add, that the evident design of giving those prophecies, was to prevent the Jews from bringing upon themselves the judgments which they foretold, so that this philanthropic purpose must be totally incompatible with the supposition of *fraud or cunning*.

A. B. goes on to state that Prophecy may sometimes carry with it the means of its own fulfilment—which may readily be admitted; and that predictions are sometimes delivered in a very ambiguous and vague manner, capable of being accommodated by the artful impostor to any period of time—this may also be admitted; in short, the friend to revelation has no reason to object to the general reflections of the writer on the subject of Prophecy. It is true there have been a great many false prophets, and a great many sapient predictions, and a great many foolish people in the world; but what then?



does it follow, that the Deity has never developed the events of futurity to his creature man, to answer great and comprehensive purposes? Because I laugh at the wonderful cures pretended to be performed by the quack doctor, must I consider the skilful physician as a liar and a cheat, and the whole medical art to be an imposition? If I reckon the man who pretends to determine my destiny by the stars, a knave or a fool, am I to treat with contempt the calculations of the astronomer, who ascertains at a distance of time, the situations and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies? or because I light my candle with the hieroglyphic of Moore's Almanack, must I shut my eyes to the remarkable predictions of my Bible, which are fulfilling every day, and in every civilized country of the earth?—This is asking too much, A. B.!!

In casting the eye down the next page of this communication, we observe a number of loose and rambling conjectures, intended, as it should seem, to invalidate the authenticity of the scriptures, in which the prophecies in question are to be found. But mere unsupported fancies about corruptions and interpolations—insinuations, without proof—and accusations, without evidence—are totally incompatible with the dignity of legitimate and enlightened discussion. What is it to Christophilus about what A. B. is “*not quite sure,*” and “*not quite certain?*” Of one thing Christophilus must be both sure and certain; namely, that such drivelling is not meeting him fairly, or attending in any way to the proposed principles of the argument.

A. B. makes it a matter of surprize, that the Jews themselves should not have anticipated the events of their prophecies (page 300), and accordingly argues, that their original meaning must have been distorted. The writer has not made human nature his study, or he would see nothing marvellous in a people blinded by their prejudices, being insensible of their approaching calamities, and less conscious of their probable fate, than the dispassionate reader of their history, or the calm spectator of their mad career. If, as A. B. asserts, the Jews considered all their prophecies were verified, “except the promises of their prince,” this must have made any anticipation of their dispersion less within the range of probability; and one cannot help asking, what becomes of a former insinuation on this subject, as to predictions carrying with them the means of their own fulfilment? “Tell an infatuated people that Fate decrees their downfall, and they thereby become enervated and half conquered.”

After all that has been advanced, the naked fact presents itself with unabated force, of a numerous people being scattered

over the earth, remaining separated and distinct from all the kindreds and associations of men, amongst which necessity, persecution, or interest has driven them, and becoming "*an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye-word, among all nations*;" and all this has happened agreeable to certain predictions, which were given many ages back. For such predictions, can any sufficient or adequate cause be assigned but Divine interposition? Without appearing dogmatizing, A. B. must excuse me, if I say, the task remains yet to be performed.

The next paper of Christophilus' is intended to prove the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, by converting an objection against them to an argument in their favour; and in this he has most happily succeeded. The objection itself, though urged by Paine, in the most triumphant manner, is, perhaps, among the weakest that have been brought against the New Testament. It is the circumstance of the various books of the New Testament having been selected into one volume, by the council of Nice, and their genuineness having been determined upon by the mere show of hands, of a corrupt and interested assembly—the objection, I repeat, is weak, and could only have been adduced by a person unacquainted with the nature of the evidence, on which the genuineness of the sacred writings depends. The vote of a synod of bishops, or an assembly of knaves, would only receive contempt from the enlightened Christian, if such vote was contrary to reason and evidence. The genuineness of the New Testament writings cannot be affected by adventitious or accidental circumstances, which may have befallen them in their passage down to our own times. Thus, if Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, he is equally the author of it, whether a council vote him so or not; or if he did not write the letter to the Hebrews (which is my opinion), the vote of the Nicene assembly cannot make him the writer of it; nor does their error in this instance destroy the apostle's title to his other works. Again, though the various books of the New Testament tend to corroborate each other, yet do they in reality stand separate and independent. Suppose that Matthew is not the author of the history which bears his name, and that the council had erred in fixing that book in the canon of scripture, what then! is the narrative of Luke or of John in the least affected thereby? Certainly not—the purport of these remarks is to shew that we do not receive these writings, because they were determined to be the word of God by a show of holy hands; but because they appear to be the word of truth, by their own internal evidence.

Mr. Paine had argued in his *Age of Reason*, that at the council of "Nice, as the object of the church (as is the case in



all national establishments of churches) was *power and revenue*, and terror the means it used ; *it is consistent to suppose, that the most miraculous and wonderful* of the writings they had collected, stood the best chance of being voted." Christophilus readily admits the whole force of the objection ; but it has happened, that the fact has turned out just the reverse of what might have been expected ; for the most miraculous and wonderful of these writings *were rejected*, and the most pure and simple *received*. That this was the true state of the case is indisputable. Now then for this fact, the author of the Evidences demands *an adequate cause*. It is not within the compass of a review to do justice to an argument so connected, so clear, and so fully expressed as this which we are noticing. The writer shews, that from the character of the age in which the books of the New Testament were declared to be the canon of scripture—from the propensity of the people to the marvellous—the general ignorance of the times, and the corruption and cupidity of the priesthood—the books which were rejected were just of the description to have been received, as they suited the superstitious, and favoured the purposes of the artful, whilst those which were received were hostile to the interest and repugnant to the principles of the assembly, which voted them as genuine ; and to make out this case more clearly, a number of passages are selected from the spurious writings of the second and third centuries, and opposed to quotations from the New Testament. The reader is at once struck with the contrast, and ready to exclaim—how is it that priests have acted against themselves, and signed their own condemnation ?

For the paradox then of an assembly of the clerical order declaring in favour of reason, truth, and simplicity, Christophilus presents a very natural and easy solution. He considers that such was the evidence in favour of the authenticity of the books voted, that with every disposition to the contrary, the council of Nice could not but determine as they did ; and in deciding against their own wishes, they evidently adopted a line of policy which appeared to them the most prudent. This is natural—it is obvious—it is agreeable to all we know of men and manners ; for there is a degree of fearful caution, generally speaking, attendant on fraud ; and there is a point of deception to which the boldest chicanery dare not approximate. Here then the difficulty is cleared up, and Priests appear still consistent—still themselves. If the cause which Christophilus has assigned be sufficient to account for the effect, what a mass of evidence must have appeared in favour of the books of the New Testament, to have caused even priests to shrink from the task of adding another attempt to

impose upon the deluded multitude! Let us hear what can be said by those who think differently.

In the first number of this year's Magazine, a writer, under the signature of J. R—s, in a short letter, written with much appearance of candour, has the following passage (page 33)—“ I am no advocate for Mr. Paine; but I think that Christophilus (in the tenth number), has not fairly answered him; for notwithstanding these books militated against the then corruptions of the church and her priests, they (the priests) could do no otherwise than adopt them, as they had been long before received by the churches; and as all churches contain some good men, and as all religions are endeavoured to be founded on the best moral principles, consequently the (then) priests could not declare against the general WILL of the churches; though these books were not congenial to the practices of the (then) priests.” Take away the ridiculous assertion, which nobody believes but J. R—s, that “ all religions are endeavoured to be founded on the *best moral principles* ;” and the whole paragraph, instead of being a reply to, is, in substance, the very argument of Christophilus, who, in assigning the reasons why the Nicene assembly did not reject these books, observes (vol. i. p. 468), “ In the first place those writings which were received were very extensively diffused—they were read in every Christian society—they were valued and preserved with care by the first Christians, particularly by those who had escaped the general contamination—they had been quoted by all the early writers, and brought with them such evidence, that though they condemned all their doctrines and practices, they did not dare to reject them;” or as J. R—s has it, “ they could do no otherwise than adopt them, as they had been *long before received by the churches* ;” and “ consequently the (then) priests could not declare against the general will of the churches.” And here it may not be amiss to call the attention of the reader to our friend A. B., who, in speaking on this subject, seems to admit that the decision of the council (vol. ii, page 304) “ might indeed support an inference, that they acted conformably to the will of the majority of Christians, in making the choice they did.” But he asks very gravely, “ what proof have we, that this majority among the Christians, at the end of three centuries, and amid the contagion of the times, was free from contamination?—None at all!—The proof is, that they were not free from the contagion of the times! History declares, that they were degraded into an ignorant veneration for the arrogated authority of the bishops, and that (to use the language of Mosheim) ‘ true religion was almost entirely superseded by horrid superstition.’ ”



A. B. does not appear to understand the argument, as it is this very circumstance which gives it double force; for notwithstanding the credulity and infatuation of the multitude had extended the priestly influence, and predisposed them for fraudulent imposition—though the spurious writings, with which the age abounded, were consonant with the puerile notions of the people, yet the council of Nice could not reject the apostolic writings; for had they dared to have done it, “as all churches contain some good men” (as J. R—s says), they, no doubt, would have been able to have confronted them, with the varied, the deafening proofs that were at hand; and corrupt as were the times, it would have been declaring “against the general WILL of the churches.”

Considering then as I do, with A. B. that the majority of Christians were contaminated with the general contagion of the times, the conclusion of Christophilus forces itself upon us, like a torrent broad and deep, that “had there been a shadow of doubt against the writings of the New Testament, these men must and would have rejected them—their disposition and interest calling so loudly for it.”

A. B. has thrown together an argument, which seems to possess some originality; it will be but justice to give it in his own words—the whole paragraph certainly has a good deal of the *ornamental*:—

“When we picture to our minds the bulky heaps of scrips and scrolls, that the imperial edict would cause to be accumulated; when, in our thought, we survey the many bundles of mouldy manuscripts, that on this occasion there would be collected; when we consider that, perhaps, none of these writings were, or at most, that but few of them could be genuine; when we reflect upon the commixed nature of these writings; when we consider that they comprised all forms, all shades, every degree of aspect, from the nearest semblance, to the most distorted feature, that is conceivable; when these things are thought upon, can credulity or easy faith so far usurp the functions of our reason, as to induce us to believe, without the utmost scruple, that the compilers of the sacred writings, the voters of the word of God, were even capable of extracting the simple, the unadulterated truth from such a mass (I had almost said) of variegated falsehood? For my own part, if I had reason to believe that they were men of the utmost probity; and could I be convinced that all, or even more than all, the sagacity, discernment, and wisdom that ever yet adorned the mind of man, were centered in them, as in one common focus, still I should want a proof of their being adequate to such a point; and I will contend, that in the absence of a proof of their infallibility, it is highly irrational

and absurd to enjoin a belief in the validity of scriptural testimony, or require a faith in any theological system which is built upon it."

Is it possible that the writer of this paragraph can know any thing of the character and tenor of those writings, upon which the council of Nice had to judge? for in reality nothing can be conceived more opposite and dissimilar, in every respect, than the simple and unstudied narratives of the evangelists, and the puerile and ridiculous gospels which were deemed spurious—than the manly and argumentative letters of Paul, and the trifling and absurd epistles of pretended saints. If this gentleman seriously thinks the task of selecting the genuine writings of the apostles of Jesus, from the vile trash which was manufactured in and about the third century, difficult and impossible, I shall form but a very low estimate of the pitch of his intellect; at present, I am free to declare, that though I do not conceive A. B. possesses, "all the sagacity, discernment, and wisdom that ever yet adorned the mind of man;" yet do I reckon that even A. B. would have been perfectly competent to the task which devolved on the council of Nice.

Towards the close of his papers (vol. 2. p. 305), this same writer is pleased to object to the fitness and adequacy of writing, as a mean of preserving and handing down the doctrines of Revelation. "The word of God! (exclaims A. B.)—what! shall this be abandoned to the mercy of a capricious copyist, a blundering translator, or a careless printer? shall these creatures have power to distort the word of God, and alter his divine commands?" This is simply asking, why the Deity has not chosen some infallible method of preserving the knowledge of his will to man, which should prevent the possibility of misconception and alteration?

To such a question the Christian does not pretend to answer—he rests contented with knowing that the Divine Being always treats his creatures as moral agents, leaving them in all his dealings with them liable to error—he declares himself in signs and miracles, and bigotry refers the effect to demoniacal influence—he speaks in thunder and in storms, and superstition interprets it as an expression of his wrath! His eternal attributes, as set forth in revelation, are lost sight of—his benevolent designs, as existing in nature, are not appreciated! but what then? If the sources and means of our knowledge are imperfect in their operations, shall we reject them as unworthy the Deity to give, or shall we not rather receive them as best fitted for imperfect beings, and adapted to our limited state and condition. Perhaps, after all, human ingenuity can suggest no better means of conveying truth and



handing down instruction, than those which have been employed.

The truths of Revelation are few and simple; they were made known in an extraordinary manner, and accompanied with extraordinary proofs. Those who were witnesses of these things, taught and convinced others of their truth—they united into societies, in order to establish and preserve them. Such associations were not free from the possibility of corruption, because they were human associations; but still they were as perfect in principle, as any thing which has to do with humanity can admit of. Errors crept in—false teachers misrepresented the doctrines of the gospel—and accordingly those who were best acquainted with the truth, in consequence of having been appointed by heaven to teach it, took occasion, by letter, to correct existing errors, to check the progress of corruption, and to declare the doctrine of Jesus, or in simple narrative to set forth the life and teaching of the great master of the Christian dispensation.

In this easy and natural manner, do we account for the existence of the various writings of the New Testament—to have preserved these writings free from corruption must have required a miracle, which A. B. would not suffer, and which I think unnecessary. And here it may not be amiss to notice an objection of J. R—s (vol. ii. page 33), which seems to have considerable weight with him. Critics are agreed, that the original books of the New Testament were written in the Greek language; but J. R—s considers, that, from the situation in life of the evangelists they could not be acquainted with that language, and that consequently, “if they did write, they must have written in their mother tongue (Hebrew); for it is very unlikely that poor fishermen’s children were sent from Galilee to Greece to learn the Greek tongue.” If there were any difficulty in this objection, it might easily be solved by the fact of the apostles having been miraculously endowed with the gift of tongues; but to this there seems no necessity to have recourse; for J. R—s appears deficient in information on the subject.

Calmet informs us, “that after Alexander the Great, Greek was the common language of almost all the East, and generally used in their commerce with other people. And as the sacred authors had principally in view the conversion of the Jews scattered throughout the East, it was natural for them to write to them in *Greek*.” But it is to be observed, that Luke is the only writer who has written strictly in the Greek tongue, and his learning no doubt qualified him for the task. The rest (except Matthew, whose gospel is supposed to have been penned in the Hebrew), have used the style of writing

common among the *Hellenists* or *Grecising Hebrews*, "blending abundance of idioms and terms peculiar to the Syriac and Hebrew languages, and very different from the spirit of the Greek tongue." Those were called *Hellenistic Jews*, who lived in cities and provinces, where the Greek tongue was common. They used the *Greek* version of the Septuagint, and were little acquainted with either the Hebrew or Syriac. In Acts vi. 1, they are denominated *Grecians*, as opposed to the *Hebrews*; that *Greeks* or *Gentiles* is not there intended, is evident from the fact of the gospel not having been preached at that time to any but the Jews.

J. R—s expects also, that we are to inform him what has become of the *original manuscripts* of the books of the New Testament, before he can receive those writings as genuine. This is rather hard upon us; for, perhaps, they may have been *lost*. What would this gentleman think, if I were to ask him to give an historical account of the original manuscript of Homer's *Iliad*? I remember somewhere to have read, that it was first found in a *chandler's shop* in Greece; and if some antiquary were now to discover its time-eaten remains, and to prove the identity, by certain splashes of oil or tallow which it might have received in laying about the counter, I question whether, in the judgment of J. R—s, this discovery would add to the beauty, the majesty, or even the validity of the poem. Such objections are really ridiculous, and they only gain notice from the gravity with which they are urged.

By turning to the Magazine for January, the readers will find that A. B. first introduces himself to their notice, in a letter containing several acute and sensible observations on a communication, intended to prove the resurrection from the dead accordant with nature; and the Christian, who places that doctrine on a far different ground, will go with A. B. the whole length of his reasoning. In this letter were also a number of objections to the manner of the resurrection of Jesus as set forth in the gospels. Though these objections proved the writer but ill acquainted with the subject, they were pressed with an appearance of seriousness, and an air of candour, that deserved attention. Accordingly Christophilus, in his next paper, replied to them in a manner, which will be reckoned as compleat and convincing as it was liberal and manly; and how has A. B. treated Christophilus for that ingenuousness on which he is pleased to compliment him? He immediately shifts his method of attack, without having the candour to own himself convinced, or the hardihood to declare the argument fallacious. All that he says (vol. ii. 305) on the subject of the resurrection of Jesus is, that it "is built so much upon the authority of the New Testament, that it must neces-



sarily stand or fall with it : until the genuineness and authenticity of the writings of that book are fairly and substantially proved, I must decline saying any thing about it." This is most unfair!—most evasive!—for the drift of a great part of the Evidences is to show, that the truth of the New Testament is absolutely necessary to account for facts and effects admitted to exist. Christophilus's arguments then, on the resurrection of Jesus, remain unanswered, and, shall I add, unanswerable!!!

These arguments are to be found in the number for February : there is no time to do justice to them ; and to adduce all that is cogent, clear, and judicious in them, would be to reprint the whole paper. Three facts may be instanced—the fact of the disciples laying down their lives, to prove the truth of the resurrection of their master ; the fact of their sacrificing their ease, their happiness, and even their existence, to inculcate a manly and rational love of truth and virtue ; and the fact of unlearned and illiterate men, devising “ a system so sublime and rational as A. B. admits Christianity to be ;” for these facts causes remain to be found by the Deist, which shall not superinduce a belief in the veracity of the scriptures and of the resurrection of Jesus.

In the ensuing number the reasoning is continued on the resurrection of Jesus—it would not perhaps be going too far to say, that nothing has ever been better written on that subject. All who know how to appreciate the laws of evidence, will esteem it a master-piece of argument, and we only feel surprised that a circumstance which occurred 1800 years ago should admit of such overpowering evidence in its favour at this day. The most prominent facts to be accounted for in this paper are, that the disciples should have been constrained to believe in the resurrection of their master, after they had given up all hopes, and when their prejudices and fears operated against such belief ; and that after they had declared his resurrection to the world, in defiance of their malicious and bigotted enemies, the Jewish priests and rulers should have refrained from confronting these assertions, by producing the body of Jesus, which they must necessarily have had in the sepulchre, if he had not risen.

The last paper of the Evidences respects the success and spread of Christianity after the death of its founder, and is intended to prove the truth of the miraculous gift of tongues, as stated in the Acts. This concluding letter is not inferior to any that has preceded it : the writer shows from various extracts from “ the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” the amazing and rapid diffusion of the Christian religion throughout the vast territory of Rome, notwithstanding the obstacles that were op-

posed to its spread. And considering how slow is the progress of truth, and the insurmountable obstacles which the various languages of men must have presented to its communication, he demands a cause for this effect, assigning at the same time the gift of tongues, which is stated to have been received by the apostles at the day of Pentecost, as the only appropriate and adequate cause that can be conceived as commensurate to the effect, under all the circumstances of the case. In this the Deist will suppose Christophilus goes too far—for myself, I think he stops short, and has not even taken the whole of the advantage which his argument would allow of. The gift of tongues was absolutely necessary to the spread of Christianity, as a medium of communication to different nations; but, considering how little effect the demonstrations of reasoning, and the conclusions of argument, have on the bulk of society, I am compelled to admit that some more stupendous and striking mode of conviction must have taken place: and thus we make way for the general miracles of the New Testament—any thing short of which, from all we have observed of men and things, would have been insufficient to the effect produced.

Upon the whole, the arguments of Christophilus seem to have decidedly established the truth of revealed religion, independent of its own internal evidence, and its excellence as a system of doctrines and of morals. The morality of the New Testament has been charged by Mr. Burdon with being mean, passive, and pusillanimous. Such attacks cannot but prove of the utmost service to Christianity, if they produce such replies as have appeared in the Magazine, under the signature of G. G. F. and J. D. The same gentleman has also accused Paul with proscribing the light of reason, and enlarging the doctrines of Jesus: in these points he has been more than fully met, and it is only astonishing how a writer, with talents not below mediocrity, can affix his name to arguments which prove nothing but the thoughtlessness and inattention of their author.

The immutability of the laws of nature has also been insisted upon, as precluding the possibility of a system of revealed religion. Two correspondents, W. C. and Juvenis, who exhibit the same turn of thinking, have resisted all the reasoning that has been advanced in this respect; and on attention to the controversy, it will appear that neither of these writers has attempted to deny the immutability of the laws of nature, but it rests with “a Deist” to prove that miracles are necessarily incompatible with such immutability.

To conclude—The discussion of the Evidences of Revealed Religion, which has been so variously exhibited in the Free-thinking Christians’ Magazine, must prove serviceable to the



cause of truth; and when prejudice shall be dissipated, and the delusions of false philosophy destroyed; when the force of reasoning shall be appreciated, the laws of evidence understood, and the art of thinking more complete; the arguments that have appeared in this publication, in favour of revelation, will be estimated as they deserve, and the divine system of Christianity be received as the gift of God—as a religion whose every quality is to bless the human race, whose promises and whose sanctions are capable of reforming the most abandoned, and improving the most perfect of our species.

Nov. 16, 1812.

THE REVIEWER.

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#### ON THE ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

I REMARKED in my last communication to you, that, of late years, considerable improvements had been introduced into the department of metaphysics; and that in consequence of this event, our speculations for the future, respecting the laws which govern the human mind, will move forward with accelerated velocity. I am aware that disquisitions of this sort are not very popular; that to enjoy them, habits of thinking, very different from those which are grateful to the multitude, are indispensable; and that the very sound of metaphysics has something in it, to a common ear, exceedingly terrifying and repulsive. Yet, I believe it will be found, in the prosecution of these enquiries, that there is nothing in the science of metaphysics, viewed in its modern application, that transcends in any degree the powers of an ordinary capacity refined by ordinary culture. He that is qualified successfully to pursue the objects of *physical* curiosity, must be equally qualified, or nearly so, to enlarge the boundaries of *metaphysical* research; because both sciences refer immediately to the contemplation of facts—the one indeed to those laws which regulate the material world; the other, to those principles and rules which govern the phenomena of mind. Rigorously speaking, therefore, there is no solecism, or gross impropriety, in classing these two great subjects together, and in reducing them equally under the jurisdiction and control of the natural philosopher. At the same time it seems desirable to retain in its present very limited and precise application, the word *metaphysics*, as a term conveniently expressive of all those particular truths, which constitute the wide range of mental operations.

Of all the facts which relate to the phenomena of mind, that

of association of ideas is the most prominent and striking. Different philosophers have exhibited different views of this most interesting law; and Hartley, and Hume, and Stewart, have extended or contracted the limits of its operation, according as it suited respectively their particular designs. The view of it which I purpose to exhibit, will direct the attention of the reader to the connexion which uniformly subsists among our thoughts, and the relation which they always bear both to one another, and to their natural and exciting causes.

“That one thought is often suggested to the mind by another; and that the sight of an external object often recalls former occurrences, and revives former feelings, are facts which are perfectly familiar, even to those who are the least disposed to speculate concerning the principles of their nature. In passing along a road which we had formerly travelled in the company of a friend, the particulars of the conversation in which we were then engaged, are frequently suggested to us by the objects we meet with. In such a scene, we recollect that a particular subject was started; and, in passing the different houses, and plantations, and rivers, the arguments we were discussing when we last saw them, recur spontaneously to the memory. The connexion which is formed in the mind between the words of a language and the ideas they denote; the connexion which is formed between the different words of a discourse we have committed to memory: the connexion between the different notes of a piece of music in the mind of the musician; are all obvious instances of the same general law of our nature.\*”

But this is not all: it might easily be shewn, not merely that the presence of some external object, or internal feeling, tends to revive some former impression, but that in reality *no thought* ever passes through the mind unprompted by some *natural cause*. Let any one make the experiment upon himself, and try if he is not in a condition to refer every one of his thoughts, as it passes before him in review, to its natural and proper antecedent. Sometimes indeed he will find it necessary to pause a moment, before he is able to recover the thought or the feeling, which immediately preceded the idea which now occupies his attention: and sometimes, though rarely, from the quickness with which some of our transitions are made from thought to thought, the recovery of it is attended with some difficulty: but I affirm that it is, in all cases whatsoever, to be accomplished.

\* See Mr. Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 277; a work equally distinguished by the elegance of its composition, and the justness of its views.



It may be considered, therefore, as an indisputable maxim, *That no thought is ever present to the mind, which has not been suggested by its natural and proper cause.*

From this fundamental axiom, several important, and perhaps, unexpected consequences necessarily follow. It follows that the vulgar notion of supernatural agency is not only gratuitous, but in direct opposition to a settled law of our nature. It follows that dreams and presentiments can have nothing in them ominous or foretelling. And it follows too, that the ordinary belief in good and bad spirits, to whose activity the world is under so many obligations, is altogether fanciful and groundless.—I beg always to be understood, as speaking of the *present* order of the universe, and of the scenes which are spread before the *present* generation of mankind—A candid writer would, perhaps, add, for the admonition of the incautious reader, that should he feel disposed to subscribe the truth of the foregoing observations, he subscribes, at the same time, the doctrine of necessity.

Your's, &c.

Nov. 9, 1812.

ZETA.

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ON FOREKNOWLEDGE.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**O have right ideas and just notions of what is connected with the common affairs of life is desirable, and the acquirement of them is thought praiseworthy; but in matters in which the most important concerns of religion are involved, cannot be unworthy the most exalted character in the world. Having often examined the *Freethinking Christians' Magazine* with anxious expectation, to find a discussion of the doctrine of Foreknowledge, but nothing having yet appeared directly upon that subject, I now avail myself of the present occasion to drop a few hints to excite the attention of the better informed, that the subject may have a chance of a full and candid examination; because upon it depends the truth or error of what I consider the ridiculous tenets of Calvinism, such as particular election, predestination, final perseverance, and all the minor matters consequent thereupon; the fall of Adam, and the supposed natural depravity of his off-spring: with all the train of Calvinistic unchristian doctrines, contended for both in and out of the establishment.

I am aware the subject has been much controverted, but it unfortunately happens that nothing has hitherto come to my hands that has any tendency to an elucidation of it: some, intimidated by fear, have made concessions which destroy what

ever they had supported against it, and dared not to pursue the subject thoroughly, lest they should say something derogatory to the Divine Being, and have thence run and split upon the very rock they dreaded, as will by and by appear; for instance, notwithstanding they find difficulties that are not easily, no nor possibly, got over, yet they will allow that Jehovah (whose name I wish to be understood should not be used irreverently) knew long before time begun, nay from eternity, every thought and action, whether virtuous or wicked that should take place to the consummation of time and the ultimate end of all, and that it could not be possibly otherwise, that to suppose less would undeify him and make him as little or less than ourselves: and thus they suppose they honor God. But let them examine carefully the opposite side of the question, and to their astonishment they will find that it involves the incapacity of making a free agent capable of liberty of chusing virtue in preference to vice, and *vice versa*; upon which, in my apprehension depends all accountableness, and the equity of a future judgment: for if our future actions, as well as thoughts, are all known, there can be no contingencies, no liberty to do or leave undone—the track is marked out, and must be trod without deviation. Thus man is made a machine, and is impelled by physical or mechanical, or some such irresistible force as cannot be overcome; and the matter is insisted upon so far by some, that all future ideas which have not ever had any existence in the mind of man, are and ever were known, which is in fact to know a nonentity. Should I be asked, how then! does God not know any thing beforehand? I answer, yes—it is consistent with the doctrine of free agency and accountableness, that he knows what he intends to do to promote the welfare of his creatures, and also what judgments shall be inflicted upon the wicked. These things are clear in the predictions of the prophets, respecting the glorious kingdom he intended to erect by his son, and in the denunciations threatened against disobedience of the wicked. But if all thoughts as well as actions are known, it implies a preordination, and a preordination is a strong city of refuge for the murderer, the thief, the fornicator, the drunkard, and for every other vicious character in the world. They may truly say, in the integrity of my heart have I done this or the other; and it may be asked, why so many prisons, why such severities are executed upon our fellow-creatures?

There are others again who contend that, to foreknow whatever comes to pass, does not impel or influence the action in any sense whatever; and this is one of those wretched means by which they pretend to honour God and justify his conduct towards man, while in fact they do him the greatest dishonour



and make him who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, the very author of all the wickedness that has or ever shall take place. Such reasoning has often made me wonder how it could please the writers, but the clearness of which I could never comprehend or understand. Others contend again that the unchangeableness of God prevents there being any thing like foreknowledge in him, for when that comes to pass which was foreknown, it is only known and implies a liability to change. In support of this they state that many things are said of God which are not applicable to him, as that he has no "hands, eyes, ears, repentance, &c. but are spoken of him by way of accommodation to our understandings." In this way might the most obvious facts be explained away; but let such as support their ideas of Jehovah in this way, say what we are to understand by his predictions, but that he does actually foreknow whether it implies liability to change, or is any ways derogatory to him or not, for I am certain that no other ideas can be attached to them but that he actually foreknew. Let them prove to the contrary who can, for I candidly confess it is above my conceptions.

The case of Judas will no doubt be levelled against me here; and with it, I acknowledge, I am not a little perplexed, but yet believe there is something in the history of Judas hid in obscurity, which may, by the assistance of literature, appear as clear as the sun in his meridian splendour, and which I trust you or some of your correspondents will bring to light. Should any say to the law and to the testimony, such I would inform, the scriptures are not barren upon this subject in positive declarations, and may be supported by the uniformity and equitableness of the conduct of the Divine Being in all his dispensations towards man.

It will be thought strange by some, when I tell them I am also contending for the honour of God, and shall use the very arguments of my opponents for that purpose. In the first place then, an attempt to infringe upon any one attribute of Deity is equally derogatory to an infringement upon another. Now to contend that God has not exerted all his power, but that he can create worlds, and exercise his providential influence, is no infringement upon his omnipotence, nor any denial of his almighty power; then why should it be thought an infringement upon his omniscience in the denial of his knowing nonentities? Nay, I contend that the capacity of creating, magnifies his omnipotence, which would otherwise be limited, and not be omnipotence at all. And the possibility of extending or knowing more than he at present does, is no ways derogatory of him, but the only and very perfection of his omniscience, which could not possibly be otherwise omniscience at all. To support the opposite would be, in fact, a limita-

tion of his omnipotence or power, and a limitation of his omniscience or knowledge, and be derogatory to that Being for whose honour I wish to live and die.

These, Mr. Editor, are the means I have used, designing to bring the subject into agitation, that it may undergo a free, full, and candid examination; hoping that none that engage in it will satisfy themselves with mere affirmations, but prove by arguments, as they proceed, that the subject which has been dreaded investigating may be made clear and intelligible to the weakest capacity; and whether it ever is proved, will be highly satisfactory to

AN ENQUIRER AFTER TRUTH.\*

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#### ON THE FAITH AND TEMPTATION OF ABRAHAM.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**O aid the cause of free enquiry, to remove stumbling blocks which lie in the way of unbelievers, and to represent Christianity in a manner that is engaging and acceptable, appears to be the design of your Magazine.

If to entertain the most rational and consistent ideas of Deity; to relieve the minds of men from erroneous conceptions, and false conclusions, concerning the sacred scriptures, and the conduct of the Divine Being, be consistent with and favourable to the cause of Christianity; then I conclude that every such attempt is admissible in your publication. If the following thoughts "on the faith and temptation of Abraham" be deemed compatible with your design, and suited to answer the purposes above mentioned, you will give them a place in some ensuing number of your work.

In entering on this subject, permit me first to observe, that it is common to find when a phrase or sentence recorded in the sacred scriptures does not agree with the system which has been espoused by any particular denomination of Christians, that then it is readily concluded to be a mistranslation, or an interpolation to the sacred text. The different parties alternately accuse each other of attempting by violence to make the scriptures speak what they wish, rather than to understand them as they are. They each labour to guard against any meaning that would show their favourite system unpleasing to the eye of common sense.

\* By way of bringing this interesting and important subject into discussion, we have given a ready insertion to the above; though we are free to express it as our opinion, that the writer has not taken that view of the divine prescience which can be reckoned either scriptural or philosophical. We hope the enquiry will attract the attention of some of our correspondents, who will be able to handle it in a way suitable to the delicacy of the subject.—EDITOR.



I observe also, that when the text relates to the conduct or character of God, however grossly it reflect upon him, yet if it cannot be brought to support any favourite doctrine on either side, they will all, generally speaking, admit the stain to rest on the divine character, without any apparent wish to remove it, which they might do by allowing the narration to be defective, or some incorrectness in the translation.

I now come to the subject, viz. the case of Abraham in offering his son Isaac upon the altar. This, if the history be correct, was done by the express command of God. Now though it shocks all the tender feelings of the human heart, and represents the Deity as acting cruelly to his servant Abraham, yet mankind in general are taught to believe it; and are willing to admit all the absurd consequences, rather than make an apology for the historian, or seek a sense more agreeable to reason, and the conduct of God towards mankind.

Having thus alluded to the case, I beg to explain wherein the history appears to me to be incorrect, and offer some reasons for such a conclusion. The question is this—does it appear reasonable that God commanded Abraham to offer his own son?

I cannot read the original, but I think that some alteration should be made in the translation, or some addition thereto, to prevent the general opinion which attends reading the history as it is, and the consequent sentiments arising from such an erroneous opinion. This may be done, if we are allowed to take this history as we often take from our friends their narration of a fact, or an event unknown to us before. In such a case it is not uncommon to hear them first tell us that which was the subsequent or last thing which happened; or they briefly preface their account with an allusion to the event. This in some instances is done first, to prepare the mind to attend to the circumstances leading to the end; and sometimes, in remarkable cases, the impression on the minds of the parties concerned is first spoken of, to prevent a rash imputation of criminality to their conduct.

This appears to be nearly the case in the account we have of Abraham and his temptation. The writer begins as if he were afraid that the conduct of Abraham would disgust the reader, and therefore says “that God did tempt Abraham,” &c. by which I understand that Abraham had an expectation that God would provide a lamb for him to offer, which, not being done immediately, occasioned some doubts to arise in his mind concerning the promise of a lamb. This state of disappointment produced impatience, and in the confusion of thought it suggested to him, surely my son must be the lamb which God intended to be offered. This was the temptation

or trial that is spoken of; and this is attributed to God, merely because it was occasioned by some delay of the promise, but not by the command of God to slay his son.

Admitting then that God did promise to provide a lamb, I think we may read the two first verses of this twenty-second chapter of Genesis after this manner.

“And it came to pass that God said unto Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer there a lamb that I will provide, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Thus the history containing nothing of Abraham's being tempted by God, nor any command for him to offer his son, is free from every thing objectionable concerning the divine conduct, and rendered every way more consistent with reason and revelation.

I am aware some will object, and say “that by altering a text, or making additions, we destroy the meaning of it, and may prove any thing,” &c. That some addition to the history is necessary, even upon the common opinion of it, will, I think, be admitted. How can it appear credible without it? For whether Abraham really received a command from God to offer his son or not, we must suppose much conversation (not in the history) passed between Abraham and Isaac before he was laid upon the altar. We cannot imagine that Abraham who was an hundred years older than Isaac, seized upon his son by surprise, and bound him against his will. We must suppose that the father *reasoned* with him upon the fitness of his being submissive and obedient. But if God commanded Abraham to offer his son, and he went on his journey with that intent, we must suppose further that Abraham said to him, “although I told you that God will provide himself a lamb,” yet this I did being fearful of making you uneasy on the journey, in the view of such an awful event, as the father slaying his beloved son. Some conversation of this kind with Isaac must have taken place, to convince him of the delusion he was under, and the pious fraud of which the father had been guilty in encouraging his son to expect a lamb; for it must appear to be a fraud or trick of Abraham's, if he at the same time designed to make his son the victim.

These observations might be unnecessary, were it not that they tend to prove, that take the history as we may, it is not a complete account without some addition. Let me observe further, that though Abraham be celebrated for his faith, and in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, v. 17, particularly, in respect to offering up his son—“By faith (or fortitude) Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac;” yet he is no where in



the sacred scriptures celebrated for this as acting in submission to a divine command, or doing a pious act. It is mentioned as an instance of fortitude, in which sense the term faith is often used in this chapter in respect to him and others.

He was certainly very intent on the worship of God; and he no doubt was uneasy when he found no lamb. His patience and faith were tried in waiting for God, and apprehending that his son must be the victim, this trial must be great indeed. But Isaac being a child of promise, and Abraham's love to God and confidence being great, he accounted, or considered and concluded, that God was able to raise him from the dead as well as to give him to his parents in their old age. But when or at what time he expected that God would raise him is not told us. He must have expected it immediately, if God had commanded to offer him, or he could not have truly told his servants, that "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you:" and if it be true that he intended to offer Isaac, and this in obedience to the command of God, I must leave to those who think so to define what kind of worship Isaac was to perform.

I object then to the translation as it is, both because it represents Abraham as acting with duplicity towards his son and his servants, and the Deity as being cruel in his command to his faithful servant Abraham. Besides, it is contrary to the assertion of the apostle James, who, speaking of God, says (chap. i. 13) "neither tempteth he any man." If this be true, why should we think that he tempted Abraham?

Another reason for objecting to the translation is, that it countenances the abominable practice of offering human sacrifices: for though the act did not take place, yet it is said to be the command of God that it should be done.

Had a command been given to slay the child of a servant or stranger, it would have been shocking: but to suppose that God would command a parent to do violence to those tender feelings and affections which he had implanted in human nature, by slaying his only or most beloved son, is very absurd and unaccountable.

Another reason I would offer against the translation is this.—It represents the Deity as acting with duplicity towards his servant Abraham, by calling into action all the tender and noble feelings of his heart, by raising his courage and trying his fortitude in a profitable employment: it supposes God to give a *positive command* (where the law of morality could not enforce obedience,) and at the same time *disguise* that his command should not be obeyed. Does not the supposition weaken to human view the authority of God, and leave the mind in a state of wretched uncertainty? For if it be true, we may boast

of being blessed with a divine revelation, and yet suffer under suspicions that the will of God is not made known. On these considerations there is reason to conclude that the translation is false, or very incomplete.

Such, Mr. Editor, are my present thoughts upon the subject. If they fall in the way of any unbelievers in Christianity, I hope they will not be offensive; and I feel confident that the Christian will find comfort in embracing them.

This subject will afford us improvement, if it help us to watch against temptation. In it we have the trial of Abraham's faith; the *trial* of faith will sometimes prove it to be defective. Had there been no defect in the faith of Abraham, he would, I think, have waited with more patience, and continued his expectation of a lamb for the victim. Had he done so, he probably would have avoided the sore temptation which he suffered. This idea of the case I confess is a reflection upon the conduct of Abraham not the most agreeable. I only add that is no proof of its being false.

It is creditable to the sacred scriptures, that they record not only the piety and virtues of great and good men, but also their *failings* and their *vices*. For instance, Job is renowned therein for his *patience*, but those scriptures record that under an heavy affliction he became peevish and "cursed his day." Moses was remarkable for *meekness*, but the scriptures also record instances wherein he was *rash* in word and deed.—David stands as an instance of great *devotedness* to God, but it is not concealed from us how much he was *polluted* with the evil of his own way. Solomon is celebrated for his *wisdom*, and dedicated a temple for the worship of the true God; but it must have been *foolishness* in him not to abstain from idols. Abraham is justly reputed for his faith, and believing the promises of God, and in one instance that he did not stagger through unbelief; but it does not follow that he never staggered, nor that he was always free from doubts and fear. There are instances in which it appears his conduct was the result of impatience and the want of confidence. In these and other instances, we may observe that some of the most eminent men have stained their characters by some actions directly opposite to the peculiar virtues in which they shone. May we be more guarded—we have the will of God revealed for our guide, and exceeding great and precious promises for our comfort and support—may we continue to be obedient and unshaken in our faith and confidence!

We may learn from the case of Abraham and others, how liable we are to misconduct, and to involve ourselves in distress, if zeal be not guided by knowledge, nor fortitude directed by prudence; when enthusiasm will offer in sacrifice



what the Lord hath not required, and superstition how where there is no God.

May we highly prize the evidences of divine truth, upon which we rest our faith and hope, and carefully guard against every delusion. Yours, &c. J. D.

P. S. Since the preceding thoughts were penned, the writer, on reading them to a friend, was referred to a piece entitled "The Old Testament illustrated," &c. by Samuel Parker.

In the Appendix of which (No. 2) he acknowledges having been favoured with a little work written by a Jew, in which the account given of the matter is different from what is usually presented to the mind of the enquirer. This author (viz. the Jew) says, "if it be rightly considered, it will soon appear that the Lord never ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac; nor did Abraham imagine before he went upon that journey, or while he was on that journey to the land of Moriah, that the Lord intended that the sacrifice which he was to make should be his son."

And further, he says, "The whole misconstruction of Genesis xxii. ver. 2, arises from the wrong translation of the affix pronoun *him*;\* as also in verse 13, *they* should be rendered *that*; and the word *asher* (which) has no relation to the mountain, but it agreeth with the sacrifice."

It is no small gratification to the writer to find that his opinion of the above verse is so clearly and ably supported by the learned Jew; at least it shields him from fear of contempt and ridicule, having proof that his thoughts are neither new nor unfounded.



#### THE PRIMITIVE CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH DELINEATED.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

I THINK I may, without the imputation of arrogance, assume, that I have proved the point of my two former essays, viz. that pulpit preaching and stated ministers are repugnant to the primitive method of promulgating Christianity; that the apostles did appoint specific and proper means for its perpetuation; that the church alone ought to be the teachers of it; and that they did unite all believers into one body, called the church, under one constitution and government. I say, Sir, I may justly consider that these points are proved beyond the power of contradiction, because, notwithstanding the numbers interested (both churchmen and dissenters) in supporting opposite opinions, not one has dared to wield his pen in answer to my arguments. Even the specious Juvenis, who professes such an ardent desire for truth, and who has been called upon in such a way as to implicate his honour and his honesty by

\* [T]he pronoun of the third person signifies either a person, creature, or thing.

his silence ! even he has not ventured to advance one argument to overturn my hypothesis.

Taking it for granted that I have hitherto been right, it shall be the business of this essay to shew, that the apostles not only formed the Christian church, but they gave it a constitution and government, the wisest and the best that could possibly be devised. A striking proof of which is, that the first national assembly of France, composed of the most enlightened philosophers that ever adorned human intellect—of men who, generally speaking, discarded Christianity altogether as a fable ; yet these men either copied a constitution and government from the primitive Christian church ; or, if not thus copied, framed one as the result of all their united wisdom, which, in every part that was excellent, so corresponded with it as to make it appear a copy, as I trust will be seen when I have shewn from the New Testament what was the primitive constitution and government of the Christian church.

Should I be able to establish this point, it must furnish a strong and striking argument in favour of the divine origin of Christianity, as it will exhibit a constitution and government, the work of illiterate men, which all the learning of eighteen centuries has not been able to exceed ; for it appears to me that the first constitution of France was only defective, in as much as it was given to a nation who were the slaves of ignorance and their passions, while the constitution of the Christian church was intended for men selected from the mass of mankind, for the purpose of being cured of their folly and ignorance, by motives the most powerful that could be presented to the human mind. The same causes, ignorance and the passions of men, have for the present overturned them both ; Bonaparte has triumphed over the constitution of France, and the pope, with his subordinate agents, over Christianity. Both these events have been foretold in the sacred writings ; the constitution of the Christian church and of the French republic, have served as links in the great chain of Providence to shew what true liberty and good government are, and when men are enlightened by religion, and made fit for such government, these constitutions will be again referred to as standards, and like another phoenix, liberty, both religious and political, will rise from their ashes : but religion must first assume its sovereign sway over the minds of men—then will political liberty follow in its train, in spite of all its opposers, for God himself has spoken it !

In speaking of a constitution and government, it will be necessary to shew that a constitution and a government are two distinct things. Mr. Paine (*Rights of Man*, part ii. p. 28) says, “ a constitution is not the act of a government, but of a people



constituting a government, and government without a constitution is power without right. All power exercised over a nation must have some beginning; it must be either delegated or assumed. There are no other sources. All delegated power is trust, and all assumed power is usurpation." And (page 3) "a constitution is a thing antecedent to the government, and always distinct therefrom. Every society and association that is established, first agreed upon a number of original articles, digested into form, which are its constitution. It then appointed its officers, whose power and authorities are described in that constitution, and the government of that society then commenced. Those officers, by whatever name they are called, have no authority to add, to alter, or abridge the original articles: it is only to the constituting power that this right belongs."

To Mr. Paine's argument generally, I most cordially assent. As it respects a nation, all assumed power on the part of man is usurpation; but there is a government assumed which even he could not call usurpation—the government of God, who assumes the government of the universe, because he is its creator and supporter—he assumed the government of Israel because he was their deliverer; and he assumed the government of his church because he had formed it, and delivered it from guilt, ignorance, and slavery; and therefore it is that he has given it a constitution and government according to his own will. He is the only true despot—he governs with uncontrouled sway! And who so fit to govern? For I am fully persuaded, whatever forms of government may be excellent, none would be equal to a despotism, provided we could find a despot infinitely wise, powerful, and good. God, then, is this despot in the Christian church, and consistent with that character he has by Jesus and his apostles, formed a constitution and government for the Christian church, and given to Jesus the right alone of legislating for it, and to its members the executing of its laws. There is no part of the New Testament that upon any occasion gives the church the right of legislating for itself: the apostle Paul says, "other foundation (constitution) can no man lay than I have laid;" and that "the church of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus being the true corner stone."

If this be the fact; if God has formed a constitution for the Christian church; and if in national government no person, by whatever name he may be called, or office he may bear, has authority "to add to, alter, or abridge, the original articles," which must necessarily be imperfect, because of the imperfect being who formed them: much less can any man, or set of men, have authority to alter in any degree, a constitution framed and appointed by God

himself, as I hope to prove that of the Christian church was ; and not only that God gave them a constitution, but that he also constituted them a people.

It is admitted that we have no written constitution—there needed none—all its institutions were so simple and consistent with reason, that once made known they would be easily understood and remembered. The apostles formed the constitution and government by the appointment and under the direction of Deity ; and during their lives, either by themselves or their agents, saw it put in practice. See Paul's instructions to Titus, i. 5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. See also Acts xv. 41. Paul went through Syria confirming the churches. (xvi. 5). So were the churches established in the faith. (1 Cor. vii. 17) So let him walk. So ordain I in all churches. xi. 16. We have no such custom, neither the churches of God. xiv. 33. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches. xvi. 1. As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so do ye. 1 Thess. ii. 14. Ye became followers of the churches of God.—Here then we discover that the church was subject to the constitution and laws formed by the apostles, and that upon all difficult points they referred to them for instruction, and submitted to their authority ; and though we have not the written constitution, we have in the New Testament the history of that constitution, as it was in practice, and the comments of the apostles upon it. All their writings go upon and sanction a constitution already formed and universally known ; and as it must be clear that the people had no hand in the forming, so they never could have a power to alter in one single iota ; and if through the lapse of time, or any other circumstances, difficulties should arise, it is the duty of Christians not to judge of the utility of any practice ; but as in respect to the laws of England we refer to the comments of Blackstone and others, so can Christians refer to the comments of the apostles with much greater certainty, who were not merely the commentators but the authors of that constitution on which they commented : and having referred to their writings, it is the duty of Christians and Christian churches to conform in every respect to their rule. The Christian's liberty is great, but it is confined within the range of that constitution which was appointed by God himself.

I have said that the best part of the French constitution would appear as a copy of the constitution of the Christian church : but I would observe that the latter must necessarily possess advantages over the former, arising out of the circumstances



in which they were placed. The French had a king, so has the Christian church; but the one was a weak man totally unfit for his situation, while the other has the Deity<sup>s</sup> for its despot, and Jesus as its king—a king the wisest of men, and made perfect by sufferings. The French republic was a representative government, but the government of the Christian church is superior. The French representation was a body of 500 or 1000 men to legislate and act for all the rest. In the Christian church, God, and Jesus by his appointment legislate for it. The French nation sent a representative, from every district to transact their business, but the Christian church, though but one, has improved upon democracy and modern representative government. Being divided into small branches, it is free from the tumult of pure democracy; and in those branches each individual acting for himself, without being under the necessity of being represented by another, has advantages which representation would never give. Each branch was at liberty to regulate its own concerns, while it kept within the pale of the constitution. It was only on very important concerns, where the circumstances made it necessary, that they needed to act by delegation.

I have before said the constitution was not formed by the people, but by Jesus and his apostles. It is evident to me nothing was left unprovided, as Jesus was seen by his apostles (Acts i. 3) forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. I have previously shewn that this time could not not have been spent in teaching the doctrines of Christianity, but must have been employed in giving instruction respecting the kingdom he was about to establish; in addition to which he promised to endow them with power from on high to perform the arduous task. The Christian constitution that the apostles formed was a monarchical, with all the advantages of a republican government. The authority of God to establish such a kingdom was founded on what he had done for them: he had called them out of darkness into light—he had delivered them from the bondage of heathens, and translated them into the kingdom of his son—they were not their own, but bought with a price, i. e. they were before enslaved to them, but God, by redeeming them from their power and its consequences, and independent of being their Creator, had obtained as great a right to their obedience; as the man who purchases a slave from the hands of a tyrannical and oppressive master.

On this ground it is that God set up a kingdom in the Christian church, which is called the kingdom of God, and appointed Jesus as its king, governor, legislator, and head, as Peter testifies (Acts. ii. 36). "Therefore let all the house of Israel

know, that God hath made that same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ" ( governor and king). Ephes. i. 21, where Paul says that God hath set Jesus " far above all principality and power, might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world or age but that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head of all things to the church." Phil. ii. 9, 10. " Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name (or authority) of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord (or governor), to the glory of God the Father." Here are passages sufficient to prove that a king was a necessary part of the Christian constitution ; that this king was not chosen by the people but by the Deity ; and that Jesus was the only rightful king and head of the church ; consequently, that the persons over whom he was king, were constituted or formed into a kingdom, and this kingdom was one and indivisible : however wide apart of its members were scattered, they formed a united federal society, all subject to the same king, constitution, and laws. A society so formed was not only necessary to accomplish the great work of spreading Christianity, but was the best possible for promoting any great object ; witness the effect produced by the compact body of Jesuits, the corresponding society, the federation of the Rhine, &c. The Christian church was one, had one common cause to promote, one common object to pursue, and one common sovereign to obey : it was therefore necessary that they should have one common constitution and government, to which they must submit ; and had they continued faithful to their original constitution and government, priests would have been unnecessary, and divisions and dissensions unknown ; and it is only by returning to first principles, and again resorting to their original constitution and government, that they can ever hope to see Christianity flourish, and obtain that pre-eminence which its unspeakable and invaluable merits entitle it to hold.

I purpose in my next to resume the subject, and remain,

Your's, &c.

A FREETHINKING CHRISTIAN.



## A CASE OF CONSCIENCE.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

BY inserting the following case, if it meets with your approbation, in your useful Magazine, you will confer a favour on  
Your's, &c.

*Wills, November 24, 1812.*

A LOVER OF CONSISTENCY.

*A Case of Conscience, submitted to the Consideration of the Clergy of the Establishment, especially William Dealtry, M. A. Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Bristol, and Professor of Mathematics in the East India College, Herts.*

SIR,

Lately looking over one of the numbers of the Monthly Review, my attention was fixed on your "Vindication of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth." A quotation from that vindication particularly delighted me: you are represented as saying, "I belong to the church of England, because I think it the most pure church in the world; because I think it possesses all the requisites of a church; because I think it contains better helps and more excellent directions than any other; because it is established, and wanton separation cannot be vindicated on a good principle."

On reading the above, thinks I to myself, this is just the thing; I now shall get my doubts resolved. Mr. Dealtry will satisfactorily answer my queries, and resolve my case of conscience, especially as he is examining chaplain to the Bishop of Bristol, and professor of mathematics.

The case, Sir, is this—If your church is the most pure church in the world, I am clearly convinced it would not only be a duty incumbent on me to join its communion, but it would be very much to my advantage; but I have my doubts. It seems to me at present that its practice contradicts its profession; and should I unite with its head, and become a member of its body, I should subject myself to heavy fines and penalties, from the informing crew belonging to the society instituted for the suppression of vice and immorality. But to the point—

The 6th article saith, "Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Again, article 7th, "the Old Testament is not contrary to the New. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and

rites, do not bind Christian men; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from obedience of the commandments which are called moral."

Now, Sir, what I want to be resolved in is this—are the ten commandments given by Moses, moral—particularly the fourth? Is it binding on Christian men? I am led to think your church believes it is, because it is inserted in the catechism to be learnt by all children belonging to that communion; because it is read before the administration of the holy communion; because it is fixed in every parish church near the altar table; and because, after the minister has thus repeated it, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day, *six* days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do, but the *seventh* day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt do, no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested on the *seventh* day and hallowed it)"—the people are in the habit of saying "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

Now, Sir, in the late editions of the authorised version of the Bible, on the last leaf, there is an account of the week, and Sunday is mentioned as the first day, and Saturday as the seventh. Of this I want to be certified. If Sunday is not the seventh day, then it is a working day; for the scripture says, six days shalt thou labour!—Saturday (the seventh) then must be the day of rest. Again, I learn from "Cave's Primitive Christianity," that Sunday was commanded as a day of rest by Constantine the Great, that he commanded it to be solemnly observed, and that by all persons whatsoever: and thus from him as head of the church, the seventh day, even the sabbath of the Lord, was abrogated, and Sunday, the first day of the week, instituted in its stead!!!

Now, my good Sir, what must I do? your church, in its articles, sends me to the scripture to know what the will of the Lord is; and tells me that what cannot be "proved thereby is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith." I obey its dictate—I search the scripture, but neither Prophet nor Apostle, Moses or Christ, say a word about Sunday being the sabbath of the Lord.—If, therefore, there is a sabbath for Christian people, I should be glad to know what day of the week it is; and if you can *demonstrate* to me that one day is more holy than another, whether Saturday or Sunday—that the fourth command is moral, and binding on Gentiles as well as Jews—by establishing this point I shall bow with reverence, and run no hazard of offending

against human laws, so I may keep a conscience void of offence towards God.

N. B. If I were to receive the Bible with note or comment, perhaps cunning deceitful men might make the worse appear the better reason; but as you are a firm advocate for persons reading the scripture without either, I submit the above case to your consideration—and according to your answer, either see it my duty to join a church that believes one thing and practises the contrary, or still continue on the search for consistency amongst the professors of Christianity. And if I cannot find them, conclude, however unwillingly, that to join a church, whether of the establishment or not, is not a reasonable service.

### A LOVER OF CONSISTENCY.

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#### REMARKS ON THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**O point out defects is at all times an ungrateful task, and when youth assumes to itself the office of discovering and delineating the errors of its superiors in age and experience, its observations are too generally received with prejudice, and a suspicion that arrogance or presumption dictate its remarks. The writer of the present article trusts that she may escape this censure, for reasons stated in her last, that all her observations are the result of the experience of a parent, and a mere recitation of his instructions; and that any confidence of assertion which may have fallen from her pen, will be excused on this ground.

Having thus premised, she will continue the observations that have been commenced on the present system of education. The encouragement of the liberal arts, and their professors, is doubtless of importance, as they tend to humanize mankind, to refine the manners, and to soften the heart; but whether the present taste of almost overwhelming the youthful mind with these ornamental studies, in lieu of those more solid acquirements, which, though less brilliant, render their possessors useful members of society, is questionable; where both the elegant and the useful can be attained, the advantages must be doubled, but if one must be neglected, surely it should be the former.

Young people, who possess only the shining accomplishments, feel a vacuum in their minds which nothing but dissipation can fill up: their talents are intended for show—they want spectators—they are fitted only for a crowd, like a



garden entirely laid out in pleasure grounds agreeable to the eye, but producing nothing that can be useful to its inhabitants, who pine in want and wretchedness in the midst of elegance and splendour. But such is the taste of the present day; and the education of his children is estimated by the parent, in proportion to the sums of money which have been lavished on the teachers of the different arts: and allowing that children attain to a proficiency in one or all of the multifarious pursuits, in which they have been so carefully instructed, how far do they fall short in value, to a few lessons of virtue and religion, aided by the example of the parents themselves! But it is pleaded, that such a knowledge of the arts may enable its possessors, if in the middle rank of life, to gain a livelihood by the instruction of others; and in the higher classes, that they afford an elegant accomplishment, and a safe recreation. In the former case, without those foundation lessons of morality and piety, industry and integrity, the ground work of all success in any undertaking, of how little avail would be the most brilliant talents! Without industry and integrity, how precarious would be their success; and without morality and piety, the most unwished-for prosperity could not yield the possessors the great aid of all human endeavours, happiness.

In the higher ranks of life, without the previous preparative of a virtuous education, do we find them satisfied with these innocent and elegant amusements? When reclining on the thorny couch of disease, occasioned by intemperance or folly, does not music forget to charm, and the landscape even of a Claude cease to greet the eye with extatic delight? Is the pencil well placed in a hand trembling and unnerved by the dissipations of the preceding day? Are these elegant accomplishments sufficient to preserve them from that unsupportable *ennui* to which they are the victims? While those who have imbibed a love of reading and reflection, whose minds have been well stored with useful knowledge, and deeply imbued with moral principles and religious truths, are more calculated to enjoy happiness, and to obtain the esteem of the wise. Then self complacency depends not on the applause of others—they are more fitted to perform those sober duties which fill up the round of every-day happiness.

Among the numerous errors which crowd upon our view, none are more striking than the extravagance and useless expence in which children are indulged, in the sums of money which are lavished in the purchase of sweetmeats and toys; not only by those whose opulence might seem an excuse (if there can be any excuse for extravagance); but it is, if possible, still greater in those whose circumstances are limited.

This useless profusion, and its incapability of affording pleasure to children, is so ably pointed out by Miss Edgeworth in her chapter on toys, that it is needless to say more on the subject.

How frequently do we see children, of the best natural abilities at first, entirely disgusted by literature, from the improper methods which are taken to render them attached to it! The reward for industry in learning is usually a cessation of application; whereas, if learning was not made an object of dislike, the discontinuing it would not occasion such immediate pleasure. Do we not observe the eagerness, the joy almost amounting to rapture, with which children hail the time of their release from school? What gives such zest to the vacation? not so much the pleasure of which they anticipate the enjoyment, as the freedom from studies and restraint. Every real and fancied notion of liberty, the darling goddess of childhood, is associated in the mind with the farewell to books, to tutors, to school hours, with the long train of bated tasks and exercises; and thus a foundation is laid for an aversion to every species of knowledge that is connected with literature, and too often to virtue and wisdom, which are the result of knowledge. Whereas pupils to whom study has not been made an object of disgust and abhorrence—with whom no injudicious mode of instruction has been used—feel no painful sensations awakened by the sight of books—they see, they feel the progress of their mind—the improvement of their intellectual powers—they are interested in their own advancement—their instructors, instead of having to force them to application, find them assistants in their own education—they feel the unspeakable value of knowledge, and are assiduous to acquire it. As their minds expand, they apply what they have gained to practice—they see more and more the ascendancy which wisdom united to virtue in every age and climate has over ignorance—the power which great minds have over little ones. They learn to know and venerate the majesty of virtue—the dignity of intellect!

It is too often to be observed and regretted, that if children commit any fault, parents are apt, instead of reproving only for the present error, to say, “you are always doing this;” and thus taking off the offender’s attention from the fault committed, to consider whether he is always doing it. Sometimes if a child exhibits any little trait, though foreign to its natural disposition, it will give the cast and colour to its future character, if taken up in an injudicious manner. A pupil discovers in some trifling action a disposition to obstinacy, perhaps a mistaken fertility—with an ignorant preceptor, he is branded with the crime of obstinacy for ever. The character once given, the hopeless victim thus stigmatised, feels no ener-

gy to induce him to change his conduct ; every act he commits is imputed to this disposition ; no kind opportunity is given him to re-establish his good name ; and the little culprit, feeling it impossible, utterly impossible, to stem the torrent of public opinion, perhaps he becomes what he is thought to be, in vindication of his offended character. Whatever faults we point out to children, we should be careful always to give them an opportunity of correcting them, or they will sink into hopeless despondency. The influence which character has over the mind, is exemplified in the Jews—their disposition to fraud is proverbial ; but we cannot suppose that there is any thing inherent in their minds towards dishonesty more than in any other people ; yet we seldom find them contradict by their dealings the general opinion. They feel that a prejudice is abroad against them, and that it would be useless to attempt to subvert it : they feel no honourable emulation excited to exert themselves to remove the stigma that has been cast upon them, but resort to those low arts for which they are noted. Thus it is with children ; give them a character which is praiseworthy, or the hope of obtaining one, and they feel all the powers of their mind excited to deserve it.

Parents ! and above all, mothers ! it is to you the rising generation must look, to decide their fate in this life, and that which is to come. Their happiness or misery is in your hands ! You, who can watch the first dawning of infant reason, who can catch the proper moment for inspiring a love of goodness, or fixing a principle of justice ; you, who listen with fond delight to their lisping tongues ; you, who watch with anxious solicitude their bed of sickness, and with all a mother's tenderness anticipate their little wants, look into the vale of futurity—see them, perhaps, groaning under the anguish of a guilty mind—behold them weeping for their own imprudence, sinking under the horrors of want ! perhaps blaming you as the cause of their suffering ! See them revelling in luxury, which they are not able to enjoy, surrounded with wealth they know not how to apply—slaves to ungovernable passions, whose gratification does not give them pleasure—surrounded with flatterers, but without a friend. Or see them enjoying the fruits of their industry, of your education, in happy competency, revered by the wise and meritorious, friends to the poor, respected even by those whose vices will not allow them to imitate them—on whose actions their life is a perpetual censor. Or see them blest in virtuous poverty—blest in the inward satisfaction of the purity of their conduct—blest in the favour and protection of the Divine Providence—and blessing you as the source of their every blessing.

Pause and reflect ! for you are the arbiters of their fate—on the education you bestow will depend the bias of their fu-



ture life. In preference to talents, of far higher value than learning, imprint on their minds the principles of religion—of rational religion—infuse into their hearts a love of virtue for virtue's sake—a love of enquiry, unfettered by prejudice, untinged with superstition. Your's, &c. T. A. M.

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## THE CHRISTIAN'S REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL WORLD.

“ Shall I not visit for these things ? saith the Lord ; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land ; the prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means ; and my people love to have it so : and what will ye do in the end thereof.”—*Jer. v. 21-31*.

**T**HE sacred writings are a most invaluable treasure : they are in all ages a faithful mirror, in which we may discover the true character of modern nations, and the consequences that must inevitably follow ; for God himself is our instructor. The time in which Jeremiah lived was a time of almost general corruption ; as were the princes and the priests so were the people. The one fattened on corruption, and the other was willing to be deceived. The art of printing was not known—of course they had not the advantage of the press, by the medium of which corruption might be exposed. But that they might be without excuse, God sent them prophets to declare his will, to point out their follies and their dangers. To counteract the beneficial effects that must have resulted from the teaching of these faithful guardians of public liberty and public morals, the governors and priests employed false prophets to delude the people, and to persuade them all was right, when they were on the brink of destruction. This is called, “ a wonderful and horrible thing,” and the consequences are foretold as being the most calamitous. May not these true prophets be justly compared to the truly patriotic writers of the present day, and the false ones to the hirelings who prostitute their pens for filthy lucre to deceive the public ? And do we not find their reward similar ? are not the former doomed to pine in prison, loaded with heavy penalties, while the latter are rewarded with pensions, or dignified with titles, for their base, dastardly, and wicked employment ? If it be so indeed, then woeful must be our situation.

Jeremiah was one of those who reprov'd kings, priests, and judges, for their iniquities, and warned the people of their danger. He exposed the gross corruptions of their rulers ; accordingly we find him brought before these men (judges in their own cause) to answer for his conduct, where every legal and artful means were used to entrap him. He was accused as a libeller, and condemned to imprisonment by those

men whose corruptions he had exposed. What else indeed could he expect? Had he succeeded in convincing the people of their true interest, these men would have lost all their ungodly gain. Suppose in this country it should ever happen that the judge, who tries and passes sentence on the libeller, should himself participate in the corruptions attempted to be exposed, to the amount of many thousands per year, what justice could be expected from his hands? He would see in the person of the accused his own personal enemy! God forbid this should ever happen! Surely it never can in a nation where we boast the purity of our laws, and the equitable administration of justice. Jeremiah knew his judges to be partakers of the common spoil; he therefore never pleaded in mitigation of punishment. He knew that under such circumstances it was in vain, and only tended to increase their triumph. Conscious of this he submitted with manly dignity to all they could inflict; for as well might the sparrow plead with the hawk, the lamb with the wolf, or a man with a bear robbed of her whelps, as to plead with such men for mercy. These thoughts have naturally resulted from the circumstance of our motto, and we do hope it will tend to show how abhorrent in the sight of God are deceivers of the people, and interested and corrupt rulers and judges.

Another month has passed since our last review, and happy should we be, could we say the prospect has brightened. We have no interest to deceive; our own peace and welfare is connected with the peace and welfare of the country where we dwell. We belong to no party, and our review of politics is for the purpose of shewing facts as they arise, and drawing such moral instructions from them as shall teach the Christian what are the signs of the times, that he may be always on his guard, and may know the duties that result from the circumstances in which he is placed. The sacred writings teach us to expect the destruction of all antichristian power, whether civil, political, or religious; and the true Christian is called to rejoice in the event, because, though attended with great calamities, it is the harbinger of pure religion, good government, and universal peace; and we are of opinion, that the work has begun, and has been going on for the last twenty years. With this idea we can look with calmness to all the passing events, and have a clearer view of them than those who look at them merely in a political point of view.

Various have been the changes since our last in Spain and Russia. In the former, all was victory; the French were flying before our victorious arms! Alas, how soon is the scene changed! Now, our armies are flying before the armies of France, while they have again possessed themselves of the Capital. We foretold all this; because we did consider the

land of heaven concerned, and that there must be alternate success, for the purpose of correcting that antichristian and guilty nation, and to bring them to repentance. But, have they repented? No; for no sooner had they gained possession of Madrid, than their first work was to restore the inquisition—that horrid system of blood, torture, oppression, and every cruelty!! Better would it be for mankind, that Spain and all her inhabitants should perish, than such an institution should ever be revived in Spain, or any other country. But in the midst of all our successes or defeats, where are the Spanish people? They are certainly the most interested. Why then are they so languid and indifferent? In the first place, we believe, that as God did by Pharoah, so he does by this and every guilty nation in its turn. He has given them over to judicial blindness, for having resisted all his counsels. In the next place, what have they to fight for? Ferdinand the VIIth can be nothing to them. He betrayed them to Buonaparte, who, with all his faults, has destroyed the inquisition, the feudal system, tythes, and the power of the priests—they are real benefits. Have their Cortes *promised* them so much? It is evident that if the Cortes prevail, they will do what they have hitherto done—support the power of the nobles and priests, and of course again restore the *blessings* of tythes, the government of *priests*, the feudal system, and the inquisition. If ever we expect to see Spaniards hearty in the cause, we must give them something to fight for: give them, if you please, a constitution like our own, *but freed from its corruptions*—then will they drive from their soil Buonaparte and every other tyrant that shall attempt to rob them of such a blessing!

Russia: all accounts from that quarter are involved in the greatest obscurity. After the retreat of Buonaparte from Moscow, we were amused with bulletins of most extravagant victories, which have since dwindled down to mere skirmishes. The true state of the case appears to be, that disappointed of safe and comfortable winter quarters, by the destruction of Moscow, he determined to remove either to Kalouga or the borders of Poland. That Murat, St. Cyr, &c. with their corps, were to keep the Russians employed, while the main army moved on uninterrupted. These corps seem to have been sufficient alone to call forth all the energies of the reinforced and combined armies of Russia. In thus acting, the French, under these two generals, would frequently be engaged; and as their design was to protect the main army, after every battle, whether conquerors or conquered, they would endeavour to keep up with their master, and they would necessarily leave the field of battle to the Russians, who of course would claim the victory. It is possible, that before the French take up their winter quarters they may



hazard a general action ; for as they retreat, and the Russians follow, it is not improbable but Buonaparte, with his main army, when he finds he has the vantage ground, may turn round and fall upon them when they least expect it. But whatever may be his design, one thing is clear, that it is not likely that the Russians, who could not withstand his armies in the first instance, can have any chance of success after the heavy losses they have sustained ; and if they are not obliged to submit to terms this winter, the spring will settle the business.

America, we regret to say, still continues in hostility ; nor does there seem any possibility of coming to an amicable arrangement while the present ministers are in office. Both parties are employing every means for the annoyance of each other ; and they have both disgraced themselves, by calling into exercise the cruel and blood-thirsty Indian tribes. Where will these things end ? God only knows ; for while the people are so supine as not to petition for peace, contractors, placemen, and pensioners, who thrive and fatten by the war, will continue to find excuse for its continuance. We lament the madness of mankind, in pursuing a career so wicked, and so very unprofitable. War necessarily increases the price of every article of life, and lessens the means of obtaining them ; but this is not the only evil ; for it affects most powerfully the moral and benevolent feeling of society. But our ideas of war in general, cannot be better delineated than in the following quotation, from the *Statesman Newspaper*, Nov. 20, 1812.

“ War, notwithstanding all that statesmen have said, and all that sophists have written in its favour, is an evil of an incalculable, of an enormous magnitude, and must sooner or later make itself felt by the misery it produces, even among those who are removed from the immediate theatre of its operations. It would be as rational to expect ease in a paroxysm of the gout, or tranquillity in the accession of a fever, as a state of permanent prosperity in war ; and it is happy for the general interests of the world, that such is the constitution which the Creator has ordained. Where it otherwise, wars would be eternal ; for unhappily, there is too great a portion of selfishness in the great mass of mankind, to suffer them to be very anxious about the removal of evils which do not affect their own interest, or at least come under their own observation. The details of a battle, in which thousands and ten thousands of their fellow creatures are destroyed and cut to pieces, are read without emotion by those who would shudder at the sight of a single mutilated human body. And, we may add, that this susceptibility diminishes, as these horrid tales are rendered more familiar, by the long continuance of hostilities. And yet, the sufferings of a single battle, if they could be brought home to the imagination, would shock the most obdurate feelings. If we could take an account of the sufferings, and unutterable

agonies of those who, though mortally wounded, yet languish for hours in the field of battle; of those who are rendered miserable for life by wounds, which, though insufficient to destroy life, are incurable and destroy its comforts; we should be overwhelmed with horror, and ready to exclaim, "that no cause could justify so costly and horrible a sacrifice." But how minute and inconsiderable a part of the calamities of war are the sufferings of one battle: how many such battles have been fought since the commencement of the present contest; and were we to carry back our retrospect to the last war, of which the present is the consequence and the continuation, we should find the subject almost too vast for the imagination to grapple with. If we could view those innumerable victims of war, whose bodies lie immured in the bosom of the earth, piled into an immense pyramid, whose top would reach almost to heaven; if the blood of these victims was collected to form a moat round this horrible structure; and if we go still further and surround this pile with the myriads of orphans and widows, formed by these innumerable battles, where could we find the advocates of war, who would dare to step forward and say, 'Yes, I approve of this sacrifice, but it is insufficient; the pile must be raised higher, a deeper and wider moat must be formed for the blood, the number of widows and orphans must be still further augmented, for this is a war for religion and the preservation of social order!' No, not a man could be found, but would be struck dumb at the horrid spectacle—the most infuriate advocate of war would be silent. This, to be sure, is an imaginary scene; those bodies lie concealed from human observation, shrouded by a thin covering of earth, but to the eye of the Deity they are present, they are remembered by him, and must be accounted for when he maketh an inquisition for blood. And it is an awful consideration, that crimes are not lessened, because numbers participate in the perpetration of them; every individual must be answerable at the bar of the Supreme Judge, for that blood which his incitement and concurrence has contributed to shed. Nay more, every man who does not, as far as his sphere of action and influence extends, endeavour to stop the effusion of human blood—to shorten the duration, and lessen the fury of the pitiless storm of war, must be considered as consenting to the death of his fellow creatures, and as an accomplice in their murder. To those who in reality believe in a righteous judgment to come, these are considerations of weighty import.'

We agree most cordially with these observations, except in one particular, viz. where the writer thinks that no man could be found callous enough to say, "I approve of this sacrifice." We think there are men so lost to every feeling of humanity, who, if it suited their interest, would wish to go on with war till half the human race were exterminated!

Sicily, under British influence, has adopted the English constitution; but we lament to say, that while these people declare themselves not only catholics, but their first article says, "the religion shall be the catholic apostolic Roman alone, to the entire exclusion of every other," yet they are counted worthy of all the blessings said to belong to such a constitution; while our own catholic brethren, merely because they are catholics, are not allowed the same privilege! Strange infatuation! We are fighting also to establish catholicism in Spain, yet treat it as a crime in Ireland and England. Where, where will this folly lead us, and where will this madness end!

The new Parliament has met, and the general opinion is that the ministers will want more money, and that an addition will be made to the inquisitorial and oppressive property tax. Although our manufacturers are starving, our paper depreciated, our gazettes filled with bankrupts, yet we must bear fresh burthens to enable ministers to go on in this unjust and unnecessary war against France, although every year we have found our situation worse than the preceding. What are we fighting for? Surely not for regular government. The French have one, and such a one as ought to satisfy us. This country robbed them of the fair fruits of their glorious revolution, because they established a republic. We are not content now they have a military despotism: in truth, it seems nothing but the restoration of a Bourbon would content our present rulers!

But Mr. Canning has said, that "Buonaparte is let loose by Divine Providence, as a scourge to inflict vengeance on mankind!" If this be the fact, the opinion of Gamaliel is highly suited to our situation; "if this work be of God it will stand;" and it would be our business to kiss the rod, and him that hath appointed it, by humbling ourselves before God, acknowledging the righteousness of his judgments by deep and sincere repentance; not by a political fast, but by a scriptural one. Isaiah viii. 6—"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out of thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth," &c. This is the best way to avert the threatened danger, if what Mr. C. says be true; for if Buonaparte is the scourge let loose by God, then God himself must be the scourger, and Buonaparte only the scourge in his hands—then indeed we are fighting against God. If this be the fact, how can we expect to succeed! the longer we persevere, the greater must be our disasters.

Let every Christian then use his best endeavours to obtain petitions for peace. If the people are unanimous, the government



cannot refuse to seek it for this bleeding country. But peace alone would be of no value; they must also obtain a compleat and radical reform in Parliament, or they will soon be involved in another war. It is there the evil lies; and till that is remedied, no peace can be secure or lasting. If this be not obtained, we may expect consequences the most dreadful, which are every day approaching with accelerated force.

In our domestic affairs, we have to thank heaven for an abundant harvest; but the wickedness of man, and desolating war, keeps the price of bread where it was before. Among mercantile men, bankruptcies and distress are the order of the day. At our court—profusion, luxury, and indifference to morals; where we ought to see an example of conjugal felicity, we behold an innocent woman banished from her husband; for innocent we must suppose her till she is accused and convicted of guilt.

In the court of King's Bench, Mr. Lovell, proprietor of the Statesman, has been sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment, and a fine of five hundred pounds, for slandering the Transport Board. The sentence may be just: we dare not dispute it; yet we cannot help pitying him, after a long previous imprisonment, especially as he pleaded for mercy—"Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy." This is a Christian precept, and our judges profess to be Christian judges; besides, we cannot think it quite so great a crime to doubt the integrity of public boards, after the many reports made to the House of Commons of public peculators, many of whom have experienced a kinder fate than Mr. Lovell! Such things are!

One paper, the Independent Whig, has been stating some strong facts, to show that Sellis, who was accused of attempting the life of the Duke of Cumberland, was not his own murderer. If the suggestion is false, it ought not to be allowed, as it will set conjecture to work to find out who was, and the innocent may suffer. If there is any ground for the suggestion, it ought to be enquired into, not by an *ex officio* information, which proves nothing, but by an enquiry, in which truth should have fair play. For our parts, if the jury did their duty (and who can doubt but they did?) we think there can be no ground for suspicion; and we should like to be informed who selected the jury—whether the foreman interrogated Mrs. Sellis and the Duke of Cumberland; or whether he acted upon the testimony, as given before the privy council; if he had the body stripped and examined all over, &c. If these things were done (and how can we suppose they were neglected?), what cause can there be for reviving the subject? If they were not, and if the evidence taken before the privy council was their only guide, then if this could be proved, we should ourselves demur, because we know that privy councils are not always immaculate.

These are the principal events, foreign and domestic, that have engaged our attention the last month, and a most gloomy prospect they afford; and much do we fear, that as it was with Israel according to our motto, so it is too much the case with this blinded, deceived, and infatuated country. May God in his mercy avert the dangers that seem to threaten! may the people be awakened from their apathy before it is too late, and call with a voice not to be misunderstood or disregarded, for *peace and reform*. Let those words be the burthen of every Christian's discourse, till he awaken his countrymen to a sense of their danger; then shall the king be delivered from the thralldom of the borough faction, the people be restored to peace and plenty, and make this country once more sing for joy! But whatever may be the event, the Christian has this consolation—his interest is in “the master of the storm.” Only let him take care that he add not to the sins of this guilty nation by partaking in its crimes.

## ORIGINAL POETRY.

### ODE TO MORNING.

Hail, op'ning dawn! whose tinted sky  
And gilded clouds, delight the eye,  
And usher in the day;  
All Nature greets thy glad return;  
The watchful shepherd leaves his home,  
And pipes his chearful lay.

The joyful skylark swells his throat;  
To heav'n he pours his tuneful note,  
And elevates his wing.  
With carols to the God of day,  
The warblers gratitude display,  
And make the valleys ring.

Swift bounding o'er the flow'ry lawn,  
The playful lambs and wanton fawn  
In sportive pranks delight;  
And lowing herds in pastures graze,  
Rejoicing, as thy radiant blaze  
Dispels the shades of night.

Recall'd by Nature's magic wand,  
With thee, the op'ning flow'rs expand,  
Diffusing fragrance round;  
With thee, the dew-bespangled groves  
(Where swains rehearse their plighted loves,)  
Are with new beauties crown'd.

At thy return all life revives,  
T' enjoy what gen'rous Nature gives,  
With renovated pow'rs;  
Hail, then, thou beauteous blushing morn!  
What time so grateful as the dawn,  
Of all the circling hours!

PHINEAS.



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